

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2461

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5305

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, SF,WA

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: JOURNALIST COMMENT ON PIK BOTHA & VORSTER

1. AN EDITOR OF A PRO-SAG NEWSPAPER TOLD EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR TODAY, SEPTEMBER 8, THAT HIS REPORTER WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED THE SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION TO NEW YORK WAS HIGHLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE SETTLEMENT EFFORT. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, PRIME MINISTER BOTHA TOLD THE REPORTER PRIVATELY ON THE WAY BACK FROM NEW YORK THAT THE SAG WAS PREPARED TO DRAW THE LINE ON THE ISSUE OF THE LEVEL OF UN FORCES. BOTHA REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE SAG WOULD "FIGHT IT OUT" ON THIS ISSUE AND THAT IT WAS PREPARING FOR A SHOWDOWN. THE REPORTER SAID BOTHA WILL BE SEEING THE PRIME MINISTER TODAY TO REVIEW THE SITUATION.

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2. THE EDITOR SAID THAT VORSTER'S HEALTH WAS A MAJOR COMPLICATION IN THE SAG'S CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUE. HE SAID THAT NEWSPAPERS HAD RECEIVED A GOVERNMENT CAUTION NOT TO GO BEYOND SAPA REPORTS ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S HEALTH AND THE RESULT OF HIS CHECKUP. THE EDITOR SAID THAT IT IS KNOWN THAT THE PROGNOSIS WAS NOT FAVORABLE, INVOLVING NOT ONLY VORSTER'S LOW BLOOD PRESSURE BUT

OTHER "HEART PROBLEMS." THE DOCTORS HAD WANTED VORSTER TO STAY IN THE HOSPITAL BUT HE HAD INSISTED ON LEAVING TO BE ON TOP OF ON-GOING PROBLEMS. THE EDITOR SAID THAT VORSTER'S DETERIORATING HEALTH WAS APPARENT. THE PROBLEM WAS COMPLICATED, HE SAID, BY HEAVY SMOKING AND HEAVY DRINKING. P.W2. BOTH, HE SPECULATED, WAS TRYING TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE ON THE NAMIBIAN ISSUE. THE EDITOR SAID HIS REPORTER BELIEVED THERE WERE SHARP DIVISIONS IN THE CABINET ON NAMIBIA, THOUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD NOT DISCUSSED THIS FACTOR WITH THE REPORTER.

EDMONDSON

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